

APPEARANCE  
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## Max Hugel—And After

They must be rolling in the aisles at the Kremlin. Our spy master bugged by a couple of stockbrokers?

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When it's a matter of the character of a prospective head of CIA covert operations, this country can ill-afford an absence of scruple. One shudders to think of the consequences for our reputation if a white-collar criminal, for instance, or someone under the merest suspicion of being such, were to be entrusted with the planning and execution of our official assassinations of selected foreign leaders and destabilizations of selected foreign governments!

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The resignation of Max Hugel may lead to the appointment of a professional to the position of deputy director of operations, badly needed if the Reagan administration is to make the restoration of confidence in and within the CIA a cornerstone of its foreign awareness and activity.

The Hugel hullabaloo also offers a chance to consider the overall course being set for the agency now, and participation in the debate should be open and broad. It seems clear that attitudes in the Capitol and the country now offer the CIA a latitude it has not enjoyed since the late 1960s. That, however, should not be confused with license.

It is vital to remember that the CIA is primarily an intelligence organization, founded at a scary time in U.S.

history to collect information of relevance to the American position in the world and to offer dispassionate analyses to the American president. That process of collection and analysis of information is just what any person goes through before making a personal decision of consequence. It is foolish to put a moral judgment on it; without such a process, the United States would go blind into a hazardous world.

It was only later—in the late 1940s and early 1950s—that the role of the covert actor for the U.S. government was taken on by (thrust upon?) the CIA. It was the covert action programs of the CIA that drew most of the fire down upon the agency in the last 15 years, an irony of no small magnitude to those who knew that almost all of the actions undertaken were by presidential directive as well as to those who worried that the central intelligence role would be distorted by its uneasy association with executive action. Indeed, that role was distorted—badly so.

The Reagan administration muses about a revival of covert action capabilities—repeal of the Clark Amendment, and so on. The president and his men should approach this with great caution, keeping one point clearly in mind: no matter how thoughtfully a covert action may be planned and undertaken, its consequences are never predictable. The variables are just too great, and the United States can rarely control enough of them to ensure the outcome it seeks.

Let the Hugel hurrah give the administration pause as it charts the

course for the CIA in its time. Let the congressional intelligence oversight committees join in considering the implications of frankly political appointments to critical professional positions within the agency. Let the country consider what it wants from its secret intelligence organization. If the CIA fails in the moment of international crisis—for want of professional leadership or presidential and national confidence in the agency—that failure may engulf us all.

CHRISTOPHER MAY

Chevy Chase

(The writer retired from the CIA in 1977.)